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THE ROMAN CHURCH AND MODERN ITALIAN DEMOCRACY

GIORGIO LA PIANA
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Among the many anecdotes about Pope Sixtus V, a stern figure of an Italian Pope-king of the sixteenth century, there is one which tells of an old Franciscan friar who had been a close friend of the Pope when the latter in his young days was a friar himself, known by the name of Felice Peretti, living in a small convent of northern Italy. When "Fra Felice" was elected Pope, his friend thought that Sixtus would not forget him and would call him to Rome and perhaps make him an important personage in the Curia. But no call came from Rome, not even an acknowledgment of the humble letters of congratulation sent with so many hopes by the old friar to his exalted friend. So he decided to go to Rome and speak personally to the Pope. After many hours of waiting in the antechamber he was admitted to the papal presence. Sixtus looked at him with indifferent eye as if he never had known him. It was more than the old friar could bear; he knelt down to kiss the Pope's feet and addressed him with a Latin verse in which there was a delicate allusion to a certain Aesopian fable about changing skin:

"Sancte Pater, scire vellem, si Papatus mutat pellem."

("Holy Father, I should like to know whether papal dignity changes one's skin"). To which the Pope, who knew his Latin well, answered immediately with another Latin verse:

"Pellis papae non mutatur, sed nullius recordatur."

("The skin of the Pope does not change, but he does not remember anybody). The anecdote may well be true.

Really its value is beyond the anecdotic realm, and Sixtus' reply, slightly modified, may be considered as the program of many a Pontificate. As a matter of fact, there is no institution which presents such an unbroken historical continuity in its development and such a consistency in the fundamental points of its definite program as the Papacy. "*Pellis Papae non mutatur.*"

From the remote day in which the Papacy acquired the consciousness of its power up to the present day, its maximum program has been and is the same — to control the complex whole of human life and social organization through the spiritual power in order to make possible the conditions which alone can lead individual souls to eternal salvation. The Papacy is logical; if the keys of the kingdom are in the hands of Peter, it is Peter who must see to it that the conditions which will make the soul worthy to enter the door should be made accessible to all men.

No less true is the second part of Sixtus' verse: "*Sed nullius recordatur.*" Has the Papacy learned anything from history? If we look at the maximum program as mentioned above, it has not; the Papacy has forgotten, or rather has not paid any attention whatever to all the failures and disappointments which have followed its boldest attempts to acquire full control of human society. But if we consider the individual programs of most of the Popes, the practical method of action adopted by them in order to reach the end of the maximum program, then we shall find that not only have the Popes learned a great deal from history, but they have learned much more than all other political and religious leaders, to such an extent that their institution is the only one which has survived after so many centuries of hard struggle, in which powerful empires and strong political and social organizations have disappeared one after another.

To follow a skillful process of adaptation to the ever-changing condition and circumstances of the times, without modifying the final purpose; to change the road without changing the goal; to change the attitude without changing radically the mind; to give to each Pontificate a personal character without breaking the unity and the continuity of all the Pontificates — such has been and is the secret of the immortality of the Roman Papacy.

A necessary issue of such a policy, of such a process, when it is adapted to an historical institution, is that its activity takes an essentially conservative character; it does not create new initiatives, but follows those started by others and struggles to bring them under its own control and to adapt them to its own general and traditional program. But an institution which considers itself as definitive, complete, and unchangeable, as the Roman Church does, is naturally led to oppose all new tendencies and even all new interpretations of old principles. Thus it happens that the Papacy, as the representative and central power of Roman Catholicism, is perpetually struggling between two impulses leading in opposite directions. On the one hand is the principle of resistance, which is the result of its consciousness of being the only true religion, unchangeable in its essence and in its form of government; on the other hand is the dynamic tendency, which is inseparable from the natural instinct of conservation of life, proper to all individuals as well as to all historical institutions. The former makes of the Papacy an irreconcilable enemy of the law of mutability, inherent in human nature and identical with the law of progress; the latter obliges it to come to terms with new conditions involving new principles and to reconcile itself, *bon gré, mal gré*, with them. The equilibrium between the two opposite tendencies is reached only through compromises; theological and philosophical compromises

in the realm of doctrine, ethical, political, and legal compromises in the realm of fact.

After all, a compromise which could bridge the eternal and the transient, the immovable and the ever-changing, has been and is the greatest problem of all metaphysics as well as of all religions. And it looks as if the old pagan title which became the exclusive qualification of the Roman bishops, "Summus Pontifex," was providentially chosen to represent exactly the main occupation of the Papacy — that of building incessantly new bridges to keep the Church in contact with the progressive life of mankind. In times of old, when human progress was slow, some of those bridges were real monumental constructions, which gave to their builders the idea that they would last forever, so deep-laid were their foundations both scientific and political; but in more recent times events follow so rapidly, science and politics have undergone such radical changes, principles and institutions are under such a direct fire from every side, that all old and new bridges are easily carried away by the swift current, and the task of the Papacy has become a very difficult one. There is no possibility for a conservative institution like the Papacy to keep pace with the great speed of today's political and social life, and the question is no more of building solid stone bridges but only of throwing at least a narrow plank across the gulf, so as not to be cut off entirely from modern thought and life.

During the last fifty years the loss of the temporal power, with its consequences, brought to the Papacy in a more striking way the realization that the modern world had gone too much ahead in its religious, political, and social ideals, and that it was time for the Church of Rome to speed up in order to gain the ground lost under the reactionary Pontificates which had identified themselves with the principles and ideals of the ancient regime. Accordingly Pope Leo XIII with a stroke of the pen

obliterated all the condemnations of his predecessors against democracy. From his Pontifical chair he declared that the principles of democracy not only are not radically opposed to or in any conflict with the Church, but, on the contrary, they find in the Church their natural ally and their religious legitimation. Fifty years before, Lamennais had been excommunicated for propounding the same principle.

It is true, however, that Pope Leo had not a very comprehensive idea of democracy and was very far from being inclined to accept all the logical consequences involved in really democratic principles. But he could not ignore the fact that under the democratic regime, conceived as the rule of the majority with a fair consideration of the rights of the minority, the social question was assuming a political character and as such was to be the final test of the organizing power of modern democracy. The Pope therefore went a step further, and in a much celebrated document (Encyclical "Rerum novarum." — "De conditione opificum") assumed that the Catholic Church, as it was the cradle and the guardian of true democracy, was also in possession of the golden rule which alone could solve in a satisfactory way all social problems.

Those outside the Church were not much impressed by Leo's words. They thought they were no more than pious vagaries of a theologian who, compelled to face a new situation, looks at it through his theological glasses and finds that there is really nothing new in the world, "nil sub sole novi," and all he has to do is to put the same old wine into new bottles. But even as such, Pope Leo's conservative dilettantism in sociology was a very clever stroke of ecclesiastical policy. It was another plank across the gulf between the Church and modern life.

But the greatest problem with which the Papacy has been confronted in the last half-century is that of its relations with the new Italy. The various questions aris-

ing in the Church at large did not present difficulties which could not be solved by compromises. Diplomatic bargains with the various governments, both Catholic and non-Catholic, could always be negotiated, and in its long political tradition the Roman Curia had developed a remarkable skill and almost unique ability in settling those matters to its own advantage. Moreover the task had become easier on account of the frank attitude taken by the Catholics themselves of the various countries, who had not concealed their unwillingness to support the Curia in eventual attempts to interfere with the internal politics of their nations. They either organized themselves in political national parties of their own, as in Germany, and in such a case they were led to emphasize their character of national-political associations in order to avoid the much feared accusation of political and religious ultramontaniam; or, as happened in the United States, participated in the political life of their country as mere individuals according to their personal political connections and local interests. In both cases the Vatican had to limit its activities to the religious sphere, concealing even the thought of political purposes in its influence over Catholic believers.

As a matter of fact, where a political activity was carried on in the name of the Church, the fault was not so much of the Papacy as of groups of unscrupulous Catholic politicians who wanted to use the authority of the Church and the Papacy to the advantage of their own political party, as in France; provoking the retaliation of the opposite parties and producing the final political estrangement of France from the Vatican.

But in Italy the situation was totally different. Here the Papacy had an avowed program of political claims aiming at the overthrow of Italy's new regime, either by means of foreign intervention or by internal dissolution. To effect such a purpose the Papal diplomacy had the

task of creating all possible difficulties for the Italian government in its dealings with the governments which were in diplomatic relations with the Pope. Those governments, although officially friendly to Italy, yet were more than glad to have always within reach a powerful means of intimidating the Italian government by reopening the Roman question under the pretext of complying with the wishes of their Catholic population. And they made use of it. It was thus that France imposed its policy on the new kingdom for more than a decade, and it was through this as well as in other ways that Bismarck succeeded in pushing Italy into the unnatural alliance with Austria and Germany. Even in the last war it was used as a scarecrow by the Central Powers to prevent Italy from joining the Allies.

The Pope thought perhaps that the Papal claims could more easily be realized by provoking an internal incurable crisis. With such an aim Pope Pius IX first and Pope Leo XIII afterwards, made it a crime for Italian Catholics to take part in the political management of their country.

This political sabotage ordered by the Vatican was intended to make it impossible for the Italian government to root itself in the national consciousness and to bring about its fall in a short time. That way once chosen, the Vatican insisted on it with its usual obstinacy; although it appeared immediately that the great majority of the Catholic Italian laity did not take seriously the Papal veto.

After the advent of Leo XIII, and under his inspiration a great effort was made to influence the young Italian generation and to impress on their minds that Italy's evils and weakness were the consequence of its sins against the Church, and therefore that it was a religious as well as a patriotic duty to reëstablish the political Papacy in order to create a greater Italy. This propa-

ganda, carried on with great fervor in the Catholic schools, by the Catholic papers, and by the official Catholic organization called *L' Opera dei Congressi*, was so successful that Pope Leo thought the time had come to go a step further and to proclaim his democratic sympathies to the world. It was a concession which was supposed to destroy new objections against his political program, and to make it appear as representing the newest spirit of the time, instead of being a recast of a program definitely discarded by the national consciousness of young Italy.

But such a deception could not last long. The young Italian Catholics came to realize very early and at their cost, what was the real meaning of such a program and how it was primarily directed against Italy's national existence. They could not see any valid reason why the same Church which not only allowed but made it a duty for a Catholic Frenchman or Englishman or American to be loyal to his national government, whether it were Catholic or Protestant or neither, was authorized to make it an unpardonable sin for an Italian Catholic to love and respect the democratic government of his country; a government legally elected by the majority of the population under laws of freedom, which had been conquered after so many centuries of slavery at a price of enormous sacrifices and heroic struggles. The logical conclusion of the movement was to deny the authority of the Pope to impose upon the Italian Catholics a *political* program, and to claim for themselves the same freedom in political matters which was not denied to the Catholic believers of all other countries. The reply of the Vatican to such a bold claim was the excommunication of the leaders like Romolo Murri, and the condemnation of the *Lega Democratica Cristiana* as being a heretical organization.

The reason was obvious. The new Pope, Pius X, was not a politician like Leo XIII, and although at the beginning of his Pontificate he, as usual, published a protest against the Italian government, yet he was not at all anxious to recover the temporal power. Coming not from diplomacy but from the ranks of the diocesan clergy, Pius X knew well the feelings of the Italian population, and had come to realize that the greatest menace against the Church and the Papacy was not the liberal Italian government but the Socialist party, which in Italy assumed from the very beginning a strong anti-religious character. Now two ways were open to the Pope to counteract the progress of the Socialist party in Italy: either by supporting openly the young Christian democratic party which had already formulated a program of social reforms with a Socialist flavor, or by throwing the Catholic forces into the balance in favor of the old conservative parties in order to strengthen their power of resistance to Socialism. In the former case the Pope would have met Socialism on its own ground and become the moral leader of a progressive movement.

But the adoption of such a program involved two concessions: first, a definite and clear statement which would end the conflict between Italy and the Papacy as to the temporal power, and thus enable the young Catholic-democratic party to be sincerely loyal to the State as well as to the Church; second, the grant to the same party of that autonomy and self-government which is an essential character of a really democratic policy. A democracy under the absolute control of an infallible and irresponsible power is nonsense. Pius could do neither. Although personally unconcerned about the temporal power, yet he was not bold enough to disregard the traditions of the Vatican policy and to overcome the influence of his environment; and on the other hand he was too conscious of his infallibility and of the divine character

of his authority to admit any limitation to it in his relations with Catholic believers, even in matters of political and social program.

The other alternative was chosen. The Pope granted to the Catholics permission to take part in the electoral campaign, not however, with a platform and candidates of their own, but only to help with their votes men of the various reactionary parties in order to defeat the Socialist candidates for Parliament. Obligated to make a choice between the old Liberal party, which had deprived the Pope of his temporal power but which had given to him the law of guarantees, and the Socialist party with its hostility to religion in general, Pius did not hesitate. But the great majority of the Catholics did not dissimulate their dissatisfaction; they felt deeply humiliated that after so many years of work to organize themselves and to get ready for the day, they would only be allowed to make their political *début* in a secondary rôle, as supporters of the old discredited Liberal party, creating the impression among the masses that the Catholic party was radically opposed to a program of much needed social reform. And their claims were such that the Pope at the next election did not dare to oppose entirely their wishes. They were allowed to have at least a number of candidates of their own, and, although without official approval but with the tacit consent of the Vatican, a Catholic group was formed in the Italian Parliament. It was not strong, having only about twenty members; it was not brilliant; but it represented a definite step towards the complete abolition of the old system, which had kept the Catholics from taking part officially in the political life of the country.

It did not take long for the Vatican to realize that it was not an easy task now to keep the Catholic group of the Parliament under a strict control. The Catholic deputies, challenged in the Chamber by the Radicals to

formulate their attitude towards the papal claims against Italy, did not hesitate to express their unbounded loyalty to the institutions and the unity of the nation with Rome as capital. The *Osservatore Romano*, the official organ of the Vatican, grumbled, and remarked that the deputies of the Catholic group did not represent at all officially the Catholic organizations, because the Pope never had explicitly recognized them, and therefore their feelings and their words were not to be taken as inspired or in accordance with those of the Vatican. There became apparent then the fundamental equivocation which was inherent in the Catholic political organization; that is to say, on the one hand the Vatican claimed full and exclusive control of the organization and its representatives, and on the other hand refused to assume official responsibility for the natural and practical results of its activity. As a matter of fact, the Pope could not assume such a responsibility. Being the head of the universal Church, he could not allow him self to become the responsible leader of a political party in the Italian kingdom without descending from his high rank and creating a great danger for the Church, the danger of identifying the Church itself with a local political party and exposing it to the unavoidable consequence of paying the price of an eventual defeat with the same party. But, on the other hand, to resign the control of the Italian Catholic party was too much of a revolution for the Vatican policy; it was a humiliating confession of lack of power over the Catholic masses and a radical change of attitude which could not be expected from the Pope, unless as an extreme necessity.

Such was the situation of the Italian Catholics and the Vatican in regard to Italian political life when the Great War began. We have been told again and again that the Vatican had strong German sympathies and that its policy was pro-German to the core. Perhaps that is

not true; the Vatican may have been really and sincerely neutral from the very beginning, but in regard to Italy there was no hesitation. Italy's neutrality became a vital issue, and to prevent Italy from joining the Allies the Vatican played all the trump cards that were in its hands. Its failure was due to the Italian Catholic party.

The conflict which hindered from the beginning the efficiency of the Catholic party — the moral and practical impossibility of harmonizing in thought and action the allegiance to the Church required by their religious connections and the allegiance to the State required by their political interests — came to the crucial point when it became impossible to live as usual through daily expedients and compromises and to avoid definitely taking sides. The official leaders of the Catholic organizations and their official papers did all they could in support of the papal order to work for keeping Italy out of the war, but the great majority of the Catholics joined the Nationalists, who advocated Italy's intervention on the side of the Allies. And when war was declared, the Catholic group in Parliament not only supported the government but shared its responsibility by having two members in the Italian war cabinet. It was the first time in the modern history of Italy that militant Catholics belonging to Catholic organizations, usually under the control of the Vatican, became executive members of that government which is styled by the Church as a usurper, and as such is branded by the Canon law and by Pontifical decrees as an enemy of the Church and is excommunicated. The Vatican remained silent; but the official leaders of the Catholic organizations did not conceal their disapproval of the step taken by the Catholic parliamentary group, and started that unfortunate propaganda which, supported by the famous appeal for peace issued by the Pope in August, 1917, concurred unconsciously, together with the more violent Socialist propaganda, to produce the

disaster of Caporetto. The disaster, to be sure, was not what the Pope and the Catholic official leaders expected and wanted; and the heroic reaction by the Italian people was such that both took hurriedly a step backward, and while the Pope let himself express feelings of sympathy and love for Italy such as no Pope had manifested since 1870, the Catholic leaders cast aside all hesitation and became at once more nationalist than the Nationalists themselves.

In the history of the Roman Pontificate there perhaps cannot be found a more unfortunate Pontifical document than the above-mentioned appeal of Pope Benedict XV of August 16, 1917. It was equivocal in itself, and it could be, and it was, misinterpreted and ill used by both parties. The common assumption is that the appeal to the nations for a non-victory peace was made by the Pope at the request and for the benefit of Austria, in danger of imminent overthrow. There is some truth in such an assumption. The Pope could not but be very anxious to save from total ruin the Hapsburg monarchy; which was the only one left in Europe under which the Catholic Church, although kept under control, enjoyed still the position of privilege of the old regime.

But more than to protect Austria or to hinder Italy and the Allies from crushing Germany, there was in the mind of the Pope a higher and more definite purpose in issuing that appeal, apparently directed to the various belligerent governments, but in fact directed to the Catholic masses of the whole world. The real and manifest purpose of the appeal was to warn Catholics of the imminent danger of a general *social* outbreak threatening all the nations, and to spur them to action in order to impose upon the various governments a speedy peace without victory, which would enable the conservative forces of the Allied countries, as well as of the Central Empires, to get together and form a coalition against the common

enemy — *social revolution*. From the very beginning, when Socialism from the field of abstract theories passed to a practical activity, and became a political party with a program of social reform inspired by a materialistic conception of history and life, the Church of Rome began to worry a great deal as to the prospect of a triumphant Socialistic regime. The fact that Italian Socialism — with which the Popes and the Roman Curia were more closely acquainted than with Socialism at large — was from the very beginning radically anti-religious and had started against the priests and the Church a violent campaign very effective among the working and rural classes of Italy — this fact made the Vatican so afraid of everything that was or seemed to be connected with Socialism, that in the eyes of the Pope Socialism became no less than the beast of the Apocalypse. As a matter of fact, the Pope had reason to be worried. There was and still is a humoristic Socialist paper, *L'Asino*, published in Rome, which for years did not fail to present every week to its thousands of readers vulgar, and more frequently indecent, caricatures of priests and of the Popes themselves, which were surpassed in lack of good taste only by those to be found in the famous book of Martin Luther, *Abbildung des Bapstum (Popery Pictured)*, published in Wittenberg in 1545.

Moral scandals of priests, unavoidable in a country where there are thousands of priests and not all carefully chosen and properly educated, were the daily delight of all the Socialist papers, and the corruption of the clergy was described in dark colors as being the legitimate outcome of the teaching of the Church itself. As a whole, this campaign, aiming to represent the Church as identified with corruption and hypocrisy, tyranny and exploitation, and as such with the greatest enemy of the progress and welfare of the humble classes, succeeded very well. In cities and towns where the Socialist party

converted the majority of the population, churches were deserted, priests insulted and sometimes even chased away by popular mobs. The Vatican had a good sample of what would happen in Italy to the Church if Socialism were to establish a new regime under its control. No wonder that Pope Pius X, who during all his Pontificate was an easy mark for the caricatures and attacks of the Socialists, conceived such an *odium theologicum* against them that he did not hesitate to condemn the Christian Democrats, who did not conceal their sympathies for a part of the Socialist minimum program. It was this horror of everything having a Socialist flavor that led Pius, as we noticed above, to overcome his hatred of the old Italian Liberal party, to break Leo's policy of keeping the Italian Catholics outside the political life of the country, and to adopt the new policy of obliging them to undertake an electoral campaign in support of the candidates of the Conservative parties against the Socialist leaders.

At the beginning of the great European conflict, the Vatican sounded very early the alarm against the social revolution likely to come out of the evils of the war. Almost daily the *Osservatore Romano*, the official organ of the Roman Curia, published articles and pessimistic comments on the events of the day, and the *Civiltà Cattolica*, the bimonthly review of the Roman Jesuits, took upon itself the task of Cassandra, the prophetess of desolation, admonishing kings and governments of the impending ruin. And when the Russian revolution came to fulfill those prophecies, the Vatican, far from rejoicing, felt the iron grip of the revolution near, and raised higher the warning cry: "Et nunc reges intelligite, erudimini qui iudicatis terram." It was at such a psychological moment that Benedict XV wrote his appeal for peace and it was as an attempt to stop the rising tide of revolution that he published it. But the Catholics of the world

were not responsive and did nothing to impress the various governments in the direction wanted by the Pope. Only a group among the Italian clergy and Catholic laity took seriously the appeal of Benedict, and, as was said above, that propaganda concurred unintentionally in bringing about the disaster of Caporetto.

At the end of the war it seemed that the Papacy had been left more isolated than before 1914. As a matter of fact the German revolution seemed rather hostile to the Church even in Catholic Bavaria. In Hungary where the Catholic bishops were the richest landowners and a highly influential force in politics, the Socialist regime deprived them at once of their princely estates and privileges and of their political standing. The Hapsburg of Austria, the Wittelsbach of Bavaria, the house of Saxony, and other minor Catholic royal dynasties, were wiped out, leaving the king of Spain the only crowned head in the world in communion with the Pope. England also was resentful both for the Vatican's attitude in the Irish question and for the Pope's violent protest against any arrangement in Palestine which would deny a position of privilege to the Catholics. France and Belgium were supposed to have not yet forgotten that the Pope did not raise his voice openly against German violation of the treaties and German atrocities.

But really the situation was not so bad as it looked. The European nations for one reason or another, but primarily because they emerged from the war exhausted and in sore need of bringing together in a solid block all the constructive energies of the nation, were anxious to avoid any split among the conservative parties and to gain the support and the hearty coöperation of the Catholic population and the Catholic clergy. It is not to be forgotten also, that in all the belligerent countries the clergy both secular and regular, during the war did their full duty earning the respect and the admiration even of

their religious opponents and acquiring a new and stronger influence over the populations; while on the other hand the papal diplomacy throughout the whole conflict rendered, under the direction of the Pope himself, very valuable humanitarian services to all the countries, especially in matter of relief and exchange of prisoners. No wonder, therefore, that in the course of the last months we have seen all the European governments, the old ones as well as the newly organized, eager to enter in cordial relation with the Vatican, and even in France the proposal of reëstablishing the Vatican Embassy has come again on the foreground of national politics with a great probability of success. We do not know how in a long run the new international situation brought about by the war will affect the organization of the Catholic Church, but there is no doubt that for the moment it is perhaps the only Church which, because of its strong central organization, has emerged from the chaos with the same if not larger powers and influence than it possessed before. Among other things the war has put an end to the long period of religious-political concordats, which were still in vigor in many European countries, and the Pope has already acquired, or is bound to acquire very soon, the full control of the Catholic Episcopate, and through it of the Church in all the new states emerging from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, without the hindrances of the secular power. And under the new liberal regime of those countries the Catholic Church will undoubtedly spread more rapidly than in the past.

As for its relation with Italy, the events of the last four years have altered radically too the situation of the Vatican. A restoration of the temporal power was already out of the question even before the war. Leo XIII was the last Pope who cherished the dream of such a restoration and carried it with him to his Pontifical tomb in

Saint Peter's. What his successors aimed at was only the internationalization of the Law of Guarantees, that is to say, an international agreement to guarantee to the Pope the character of a sovereign. The Allied victory and the exclusion of the Pope from the Paris Conference gave the last blow to the illusions of the papal diplomacy, and made it once more evident that Italy will never be induced to accept an international control in its relation with the Papacy. Resignation was necessary, and the new Vatican attitude towards the Roman question was well manifested by the words of Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State of Pope Benedict: "The Holy See relies upon the *free will of the Italian people* made wiser and more illuminated in so far as it concerns the independence of the Pope." It was not a renunciation of the old claims, for this the Papacy never will make officially, but it was its equivalent for a practical program of political activity, to be carried on by the Italian Catholic party.

The Pope never recognized officially the existence of a Catholic group in the Italian Parliament, much less approved of their participation in the government. But such a group was in existence and its members had been elected by the votes of the Catholic organizations, which were not only recognized by the Pope, but were supposed to be under his control, because their executive boards were appointed by the Pope himself. Never was there a stranger situation than that of a political party whose representatives the Parliamentary group elected by its votes, instead of representing the party and of being considered as carrying out its program, were on the contrary left to formulate and adopt a program of their own, some points of which were irreconcilable with the general policy of the Vatican which controlled the party.

To find a way from such an impasse was not easy; there was no solution which could be applied with satisfaction. To take a step backward and return to the polit-

ical aloofness imposed upon the Italian Catholics by Leo XIII was out of the question; the war had so strengthened the national feeling among them that not a soul would have obeyed, not even under threat of excommunication. To follow the lines of policy inaugurated by Pius X and lend the Catholic forces to the support of the old conservative and reactionary parties of Italy not only would be against the wishes of the great majority of the Catholics themselves, but would identify the Catholic program with that of a class whose control over politics is in decay and rapidly disappearing; and it never is good to be on the side of the loser. A step further was therefore necessary. Would the Pope recognize the existence of the Catholic Parliamentary group and heal the internal dissent and straighten out the situation of the whole Catholic party? It seemed the most logical solution and yet it was the less likely to be adopted, because the Pope cannot assume the responsibility of a political party. Again, to escape such a responsibility it would have been necessary to grant to the Catholic party a complete autonomy. The situation came to be again the same it had been when Pope Pius X was confronted with the young Catholic Democratic party, fifteen years before. And again the Vatican was unwilling to abdicate the political control of the Italian Catholics, especially in a period in which the menace of a social revolution, so hostile to the Church in general and to the Papacy in particular, had become so serious and threatening to the life of the whole Italian nation.

But while in 1907 Pope Pius X could safely condemn, *pollice verso*, the young *Lega Democratica Cristiana*, which claimed autonomy and self-determination in outlining a political program, Benedict XV could not do the same in 1919 with the Catholic Parliamentary group, which had already acquired such an importance in the political life of the nation as to be represented by two

members in the Cabinet. On the other hand, if, according to the words of Cardinal Gasparri quoted above, the Papacy has come truly to rely only upon the free will of the Italian people for the final solution of the Roman question, it is evident that the free will of the Italian Catholic majority hoped for would not be able to manifest itself efficiently unless a political Catholic party were allowed to be organized, with the purpose of acquiring one day or another the control of the government. Moreover, Benedict XV became fully aware that concessions were to be made to the general social tendencies of the progressive Catholics, and that the vague indefinite formulæ expounded by Leo's old Encyclical and presented as a universal panacea for all the social evils, needed a more practical interpretation, if they were to be taken seriously and be of some use in counteracting the influence of the Socialist party. Accordingly, the period in which the Vatican felt obliged to curse *in odium auctoris* everything that had even a Socialist flavor, came to an end, and a new plank was thrown over the gulf between the Roman Church and the modern world.

That was done through a new compromise. The old Catholic party, such as it was when reorganized at the beginning of Benedict's Pontificate, was kept unmolested and unchanged under the official control of the Vatican. But side by side with it a new political party was allowed to be formed by militant Catholics, under the name of *Partito Popolare Italiano*, which, having no professed Catholic character in its title, disclaimed any control by the Vatican and by the ecclesiastical authority in general over its organization and political activity.

The Pope neither approved nor disapproved officially of the new organization and its program. The silence of the official spheres means only that the Pope, with a prudent reserve due to his character of supreme head of the Church universal, does not identify himself and the

Church officially with the *Partito*, just as he is not identified with all other Catholic political organizations of the various countries of the world. But on the other hand, this silent reserve of the Vatican does not mean at all that the new *Partito* enjoys that full independence of the Curia, that real autonomy, which may be found more or less in the Catholic parties of other countries. There are many facts which make us think the opposite to be true. As a matter of fact, the general secretary and *magna pars* of the new *Partito* is a Sicilian priest, D. Sturzo, known for his devotion to the Papacy, and any one who knows how strict are the rules laid down by Pope Pius X and still in full vigor about the participation of the Italian clergy in political movements and associations, realizes immediately that the presence of D. Sturzo in the capacity of general secretary of the *Partito*, means that directions for the *Partito* come from the Vatican and that under him they will be faithfully obeyed. The fact, however, that the Pope granted by silent acquiescence at least an apparent autonomy to the *Partito* is very important and far-reaching in its consequences on Italian political life.

But there is more. The program outlined by the new party is in the main identical with the politico-social program published almost at the same time by the four American Catholic bishops of the Committee on special war activities of the National War Council under the title "Social Reconstruction." It is well known that the American program was given a hearty approval by the Pope in his letter addressed to the American Catholic hierarchy in May, 1919. Both programs, the Italian as well as the American, embody the latest concessions that the Catholic Church has made to the radical social tendencies of the times. The difference between the two programs is that the American is concerned more directly with the details of a social reconstruction, while the Ital-

ian, on account of the circumstances in which the *Partito Popolare* was born, involves also a number of local political questions and some fundamental political principles with interpretations of them, which, at least in part, are not traditional in the Catholic official teaching.

The social part of the Italian program is bold and radical enough. It advocates the syndicalist organization of the workers, which was condemned in 1914 by Pius X, and asks for class representation in the legislative bodies of the nation. The vote for women, administrative autonomy of the provinces, reform of bureaucracy, protection of small property owners, are among other measures of improvement demanded; but more emphasis is laid upon the necessity of legislation which would make general the adoption of the coöperative system in industries, as a step toward a reasonable socialization of the producing forces of the nation, and also for effective laws to provide in a satisfactory way for the needs of old age, sickness, and unemployment. The nationalistic note is strong through the whole program, and the national aspirations of the moment are indorsed without reservation, although a vote is also formulated for the abolition of national armies and for a society of nations. As a whole it is a program that every democratic-progressive party could accept without many modifications. From the point of view of the Catholic Church it represents such a bold step as nobody would have thought possible a few years ago, when almost all of its articles would have met with condemnation. It must have been very difficult for the Curia to yield in so many points to the radical tendencies of the young *Partito*, but it will be still more difficult to carry such a program into practice without affecting deeply the spirit and the organization of the Church itself in Italy.

The *Partito* had been in life only a few months when the Italian War Parliament was finally dissolved, after hav-

ing passed a new electoral law, by which the old unimominal electoral districts were abolished, and the system of pluri-nominal districts with lists of candidates on party tickets was adopted, leaving thus a place for representatives of minorities. Such a law was in favor both of the Socialists and of the Catholics, and they made the best of it. Supported energetically by the whole clergy, and having candidates chosen with a remarkably comprehensive criterium, the *Partito* reported a signaled victory on election day. More than one hundred seats were conquered, and the *Partito* is now second only to the Socialists in number of deputies belonging to a single party in Parliament. From the first day it became evident that the great battle for the control of Italian politics will be among those two parties, and that at the crucial moment the other groups must rally around them.

But from the beginning also it became evident that there are among the Catholics of the *Partito* two tendencies, or rather that there is within it a considerable and bold group of deputies who are more radical than the *Partito* can afford to be at the present moment, and who in the matter of social questions share more fully the Socialist point of view than that of the Catholic leaders, and as a matter of fact they, more than once, have cast their votes with the Socialists, breaking the party discipline. Will the *Partito* be strong and vital enough to overcome this internal crisis, and to establish such a sound party consciousness as that which gave to the German Center party almost the control of the Reichstag for many years? And if it does, will this internal accord be reached on the ground held by the more conservative tendency, or on that of the radicals? And in the latter case, will the Vatican go so far as to indorse their revolutionary program? This is the problem.

Up to the present day the Vatican officially ignores the *Partito*. No doubt, however, that *les enfants terribles*

must have been called more than once *ad reddendam rationem* of their rebellion, but it is still too early to foresee what the future has in store for the *Partito*. It is very probable that for a while the conservative tendency will prevail in it and that the more or less secret instructions of the Vatican will be followed; but it is probable also that the logic of events will in time lead the *Partito* to conquer and to affirm openly and in fact that full independence from an irresponsible power behind the scene, that real autonomy, which will be necessary to its life, and of which now it possesses only the appearance granted to it by way of compromise. What will then the Vatican do? Will it, rather than accept the fact of the real autonomy of the *Partito* and all the consequences of it, disavow the *Partito*, withdraw its favor and support, decide to retire again behind the trenches and to enjoin upon the Italian Catholics to refrain again from taking part in the political life of their country?

Such a task would be as impossible as to push back the running water of a stream to its source; but even to try would be extremely dangerous. It would alienate from the Papacy the young true Italian democracy, which has already conquered the greatest majority of Italian militant Catholics. It is from the ranks of these Catholics that the Roman Curia has received its capable leaders, its skillful diplomats, its energetic prelates, and its Popes. The consequence therefore of a definitive estrangement of the Vatican from the Italian democracy would be so far-reaching that the Italian members of the Curia are anything but cheerful in foreseeing what would happen in case such an event were ever realized. But there are, as there have always been in the past, non-Italian elements at work in the Curia, to whom the idea of the great Roman Bishop taking up his residence in Maynooth or in Boston or Baltimore would appear so full of possibilities and thrill as to compensate the Church for the loss

of Italy's new democracy. And they add oil to the fire. But Rome has not forgotten the captivity of Avignon. The lesson then taught to the Church was such that no Pope can afford to forget it and be bold enough to renew an experiment which proved almost fatal to the whole of Roman Christianity. That is why the Popes must be Italian and must come to terms with Italian democracy.